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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

Forty-sixth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 500th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 16 October 1995, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. LARSEN (Denmark)

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GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

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GE.95-03443 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 4) (continued)

1. Mr. KULLAVANIJAYA (Thailand) said that the ethnic hatred, violence and human rights violations that had continued in some parts of the world, including Europe, were the cause of mass exoduses of refugees and population displacements which stretched the resources of UNHCR and other international organizations concerned to the limits, particularly in emergency situations. Out of solidarity with UNHCR and the world community, Thailand would, despite the burdens it had to bear as a first-asylum country, consider continuing its contributions to the assistance programme for the affected population of the Great Lakes region of Africa and the programme for the repatriation of Myanmar refugees from Bangladesh.

2. The task ahead for UNHCR was arduous and required better coordination and policy planning to ensure the success of operations in the field. Thailand therefore supported the creation of the post of Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees for policy, planning and operations. It was also in favour of strengthening cooperation and complementarity between UNHCR and non-governmental organizations, as well as other international organizations, and thus welcomed the forthcoming conclusion of the Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and UNICEF, which would help to meet the concerns of the international community about the plight and education of refugee children and other vulnerable groups.

3. In the past 20 years, his Government had, in accordance with its humanitarian principles, provided temporary refuge for persons in need from neighbouring countries pending durable solutions of third-country resettlement or repatriation.

4. Now that possibilities of third-country resettlement seemed to have been practically exhausted, repatriation appeared to be the most realistic and durable solution to the refugee problem.

5. Since the launching of the Comprehensive Plan of Action in 1989, UNHCR and the first-asylum countries, with the support of the international community, had had some success in dealing with the Vietnamese refugee problem. Thousands of Vietnamese who were determined to keep refugee status had been resettled in third countries. An even larger number to whom refugee status had not been granted had been repatriated to Viet Nam. At present, there were only 5,199 Vietnamese, most of whom were not entitled to refugee status, in camps in Thailand. Although the Government had campaigned for their voluntary return, only 528 of them had volunteered to return home in 1995. Many Vietnamese were opposed to repatriation and had started protests in camps in South-East Asia which had turned violent in some cases. Thailand had been fortunate that the "quiet protest" in Si Kiu Camp in March 1995 had been limited to a small group of persons, but there was no guarantee that the situation would not grow worse.

6. Such violence was a breach of public order which could not be condoned in the eyes of the local population. As the Executive Committee had recalled in conclusion No. 48 which it had adopted at its thirty-eighth session in 1987,

refugees had a duty to conform to the laws and regulations of the country of refuge, including lawful measures taken for the maintenance of public order, and to abstain from any activity likely to detract from the exclusively civilian and humanitarian character of the camps.

7. In that context and in view of the lack of success of the proposals for voluntary repatriation made to the Vietnamese, Thailand, Viet Nam and UNHCR had undertaken in September 1995 to conclude a memorandum of understanding which would enable them to implement the alternative orderly repatriation of the Vietnamese non-refugees now numbering 5,000 in Thailand. Thailand hoped to be able to count on the full participation of all parties concerned, i.e. Viet Nam, UNHCR and IOM, and urged the international community to continue its support for the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan of Action. It would also like UNHCR to convene the seventh session of the Steering Committee before the beginning of December so that the current situation could be evaluated and future action which might be necessary could be planned for the post-CPA period if there were residual problems to be solved.

8. For several years, Thailand, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and UNHCR had been making joint efforts to implement the tripartite agreement on voluntary repatriation of the Laotian camp population in Thailand, but of late, results had been very meagre, for a number of reasons. Having done its fair share in caring for the Laotian camp population since 1975, Thailand would like the international community, particularly the donor countries, not to be oblivious to their responsibilities and to intensify their efforts to assist the camp Laotians, facilitate the reintegration of returnees and support their community development microprojects. The Laotian authorities should also be helped to increase their absorptive capacity.

9. In addition to the Vietnamese and the Laotians, Thailand had, in accordance with its humanitarian tradition, been giving temporary shelter in the past 11 years to some 50,000 Myanmese fleeing armed conflict in their country, not to mention the 30,000 new arrivals who had entered Thailand since the beginning of the year. It had recently taken measures to ensure their protection and safety and granted UNHCR and interested embassy staff access to the Thai-Myanmar border areas on a case-by-case basis. With the support of various NGOs, to which he paid tribute, Thailand had been providing food and medical assistance to all those persons and was trying to provide education for their children.

10. He expressed his deep appreciation to the High Commissioner and her staff for the assistance they were providing to Thailand in its efforts to find a solution to the problem of Indochinese refugees and asylum seekers. He hoped that, under the new leadership of the UNHCR team responsible for Asia and Oceania, the present impasse would be overcome and the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan of Action could be achieved by the end of 1995. It was also his sincere wish that the international community should remain committed to the principle of international burden-sharing and continue to give support to CPA activities, particularly in connection with assistance for and the reintegration of persons remaining in the camps.

11. Mr. HARDER (Canada) said that, while the basis of the international system of protection for refugees continued to be the 1951 Convention relating

to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol, which were a reliable standard for States and a guarantee of consistency in the international community's responses to the refugee problem, the refugee situation in the field required constant reinterpretation of the rules in order to find pragmatic solutions. Even if the wording changed - and the contributions of the recent Beijing Conference had recognized that sexual violence and other gender-based persecutions could justify the granting of refugee status under the 1951 Convention - States should in practice be able to act speedily and flexibly to deal with massive flows of refugees. The note on protection issued in 1994 had, moreover, drawn attention to the limitations of the instruments and practices in force.

12. Protection for refugees could take several forms. In Canada, public opinion, reinforced by positive experiences in that regard, was particularly in favour of resettlement, even though that solution would work for only a small proportion of the world's refugees. Canada had long relied on UNHCR to help it identify persons needing protection through third-country resettlement. It had been pleased to take part recently with UNHCR and other major resettlement countries in a review of resettlement and looked forward to continuing such collaboration.

13. Public confidence was needed to maintain generous asylum policies and such confidence depended largely on possibilities of effectively managing the refugee status determination process, sometimes through trade-offs between the granting of asylum and other humanitarian solutions, such as resettlement. It was crucial that asylum procedures should be and seen to be sharply focused on their purpose of identifying refugees who might be entitled to protection.

14. The Note on protection raised the question of international obligations to stateless persons. Canada recognized the importance of the problem, but noted that UNHCR's contention that statelessness was analogous to the situation of refugees should not have any effect on the status of individuals, which continued to be determined under the 1951 Convention. The problem of statelessness derived from the increased vulnerability of persons who did not have the protection of a State. UNHCR could help to head off future problems by continuing to advise Governments on ways of drafting their citizenship laws to avoid creating stateless persons.

15. Referring to the wider issue of the effectiveness of international institutions, whose key role in the pursuit of stability, prosperity and equity in the last 50 years had been recognized by the G7 members at their recent summit meeting in Halifax, he said it was Canada's position that the effectiveness of some institutions should continue to be improved and that major reforms in others should be undertaken by putting forward new ideas.

16. While it was true that the necessary resources must be made available to the United Nations, it was also true that changes had to be made to United Nations machinery to improve existing methods of work and enhance its capacity to identify achievements. Canada had made four proposals that would lead to a more coordinated, leaner and more transparent United Nations. They were: harmonization of budget presentations for the United Nations development system and humanitarian agencies; enhanced field coordination, including shared strategies; rationalization of data collection and analysis,

joint reporting and multi-agency evaluations; and decentralization of authority from headquarters to the field. Succinctly, "command and control" management should be replaced by more progressive approaches based on accountability and performance assessment.

17. In that context, Canada had listened with great interest at the preceding meeting to the High Commissioner's comments on steps to be taken to make managers more accountable for their decisions, to improve financial and programme monitoring and to enhance management capacity. It was in favour of the creation of the post of Assistant High Commissioner, but it was less enthusiastic about the implications of covering the related costs under programme delivery instead of administrative support. Like many other donor countries, Canada was experiencing fiscal restraint and, although it had succeeded in 1995 in maintaining its contribution to UNHCR's general programmes, it had had to reduce its contributions to other agencies. At a time when budgets were shrinking, it urged United Nations agencies, including UNHCR, to give top priority to programme functions, with the brunt of reductions being borne by administrative budgets and headquarters.

18. To achieve the goal of maximum efficiency, the evaluation function, including follow-up to CPC and ACABQ recommendations, was more important than ever. Evaluation as a post-facto instrument was a thing of the past and there were too many examples of evaluations done too late to supply corrective action. States which paid for and assisted in evaluations should share in all findings. At the Executive Committee's last session, for example, it had been agreed that UNHCR would undertake a lessons-learned exercise on its response to the Rwanda crisis, both at headquarters and in the field. At a time when a new crisis seemed to be looming in Central Africa, what lessons had been learned from the Rwandan experience?

19. UNHCR made increasing use of implementing partners in the delivery of its programmes. The selection of those agencies should take account of past performance and proven capacity. Canada wholeheartedly concurred in the CPC recommendations on the selection and performance appraisal of implementing agencies and was glad to find its concerns reflected in the report of the Board of Auditors. Achieving a truly professional working relationship between UNHCR and its partners was essential. Professional and experienced NGOs performed invaluable services for the international community, often through UNHCR. Fair compensation for costs incurred and work performed must be the guiding principle in contractual negotiations between parties. Canada took the present opportunity to congratulate UNHCR on the efforts it had made to improve the workings of the Executive Committee. It was now time, however, for UNHCR to investigate ways of transmitting Executive Committee documents electronically, thereby saving time and trees.

20. Referring again to the achievements of the recent Beijing Conference on Women, he commended UNHCR and the participating States on their contributions. The global platform of action which had been adopted should re-energize UNHCR management and staff and serve as an incentive to close the gap between policy and practice in the field. UNHCR should be a leader and prove its commitment to women by allocating sufficient resources, making training in the area mandatory and clearly defining staff accountability. Promotions and field assignments should take account of the ability and willingness of officials

fully to implement the policy directions of the Executive Committee in that regard. He hoped that the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations would give the members of the Executive Council renewed energy to tackle the many challenges that the global community still faced.

21. Mrs. ABDALLA ALGHABSHAWI (Sudan) said that, despite difficult economic conditions, Sudan had hosted more than 1 million refugees in recent years and was thus the main host country in Africa. Its record in dealing with the humanitarian crisis in Africa had been unanimously recognized and praised by the entire international community and by UNHCR. It had also played an active role in many local, regional and international meetings and conferences designed to tackle refugee issues. For example, it had organized the Conference for Assistance to Refugees in Sudan in 1980 and had taken part in the organization of the first and second International Conferences on Assistance to Refugees in Africa. Recently, the Sudanese capital had hosted the twenty-fourth session of the OAU Committee on Coordinating Assistance to African Refugees.

22. Unfortunately, Sudan's humanitarian action had recently been denigrated and distorted by some circles trying to tarnish its distinguished record. It must therefore be stressed that Sudan's achievements in that regard could not have been possible without the lofty ideals of the Sudanese people and its highly civilized attitude towards the poor and the weak, regardless of their country of origin.

23. When the Horn of Africa had been hit by drought, civil war and famine at the start of the 1980s, huge numbers of refugees had found their way to Sudan, where they had been hospitably received and where the Sudanese people had literally shared with them everything it had possessed. In all fairness, it must be said that, at the time, the response of the international community and UNHCR had been equal to the size of the tragedy. However, since the mid-1980s, that assistance had begun to decline conspicuously and now stood at only $7 million, so that the share of a single refugee inside the camps was not more than $20 per year and fell to $6 per person for refugees outside the camps. That gave the members of the Executive Committee some idea of the enormous gap that Sudan had to fill in order to meet the basic needs of those refugees. According to some information, other refugee-hosting countries in Africa received six times as much. Sudan therefore appealed to the Executive Committee and the international community to reconsider the assistance programme to Sudan, in line, moreover, with conclusion No. 29 adopted by the Executive Committee at its last session on the situation of refugees and displaced persons in Africa.

24. In its relentless efforts to have the level of support for its assistance programme increased, Sudan had requested UNHCR several times to dispatch an evaluation mission to assess the real situation. The mission had finally visited Sudan in March 1995 and had recommended some suitable measures to rectify the situation, but, unfortunately, the recommendations had so far not been translated into action. If Sudan's repeated calls for assistance continued to be ignored, there might be disastrous consequences. Sudan once again appealed to the international community and to UNHCR in particular to act before it was too late and shoulder their responsibilities in the face of that tragic situation.

25. The important political changes that had taken place in the Horn of Africa since the early 1990s had created conditions conducive to the voluntary repatriation of refugees in Sudan. However, despite the efforts made by the Government of Sudan in cooperation with neighbouring States and UNHCR, the results were disappointing. The fact was that the international community and UNHCR had failed to provide the necessary financial resources that could push forward the voluntary repatriation operations, contrary to what had happened in South Africa, for example, where large-scale action had been taken. Consequently, Sudan's economic difficulties had only worsened, particularly in the eastern provinces. In view of its limited resources, Sudan would no longer be able to bear the heavy burden that was increasingly threatening its stability and security. After the many appeals it had made to the international community and UNHCR, it unfortunately had no other choice than to take all the necessary actions and consider all the different options.

26. The relationship between Sudan and UNHCR had to be rebuilt on the basis of mutual trust and objectivity. That would not be difficult to do, since the aims of the two parties were purely humanitarian. As Sudan still hosted the largest refugee population in Africa, UNHCR had to intensify its activities in that country and strengthen its Khartoum office.

27. The issue of food assistance took prominence in any refugee assistance programme. In that connection, there had been a sharp drop in the food assistance in Sudan provided by the World Food Programme, which had made 25 per cent cuts in food supplies without proper consultations with the Sudanese authorities and on the basis of inaccurate statistics. The question of inter-agency cooperation therefore had to be reviewed in order to include the views and experiences of host countries. At the same time, an accurate census of refugees in Sudan should be conducted in order to determine their food needs. That would help combat malnutrition and related diseases, as well as the deterioration in the security situation.

28. One of Sudan's top priorities was to guarantee the return of Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries. In that connection, the Government of Sudan urged UNHCR and asylum countries to facilitate the visits of Sudanese delegations to Sudanese refugee camps in accordance with the conclusions on international protection adopted at the forty-fifth session of the Executive Committee. The purpose was to enable Sudanese delegations to obtain firsthand information on those refugees and increase their awareness of the efforts being made by the Government to rehabilitate most of the areas where security and stability had been restored. She drew the attention of the international community to the situation of Sudanese refugee children who were being manipulated, kidnapped and conscripted by the rebel movement in blatant violation of international conventions and agreements on the protection of children in time of armed conflict, as well as the recent attempts by the rebel movement to recruit Sudanese refugees in some neighbouring countries. Her Government urged UNHCR to do everything in its power to protect those refugees in accordance with its mandate.

29. Mr. ENDO (Japan) said that, despite the efforts of the international community, including UNHCR, the number of refugees and displaced persons had increased. However, in some parts of the world, the prospects were encouraging, as in the former Yugoslavia, where the peace process had begun to

bear fruit. It was to be hoped that the cease-fire would be observed. Of course, many problems would still have to be solved before a final settlement. It must be ensured that important objectives, such as the voluntary repatriation of refugees and displaced persons and the protection of human rights, should form part of any peace agreement. UNHCR should continue to play its humanitarian role until an agreement had been signed and even afterwards during the repatriation of refugees.

30. The Rwandan refugee situation was also looking better. He welcomed the visit the High Commissioner had recently made to a number of countries in the Great Lakes region, as well as the tripartite meeting organized with the Governments of Zaire and Rwanda in Geneva. Since the voluntary repatriation of Rwandan refugees had begun, it was important for the international community to facilitate their return, resettlement and reintegration in the local community; those were operations in which UNHCR had a pivotal role to play.

31. In promoting solutions to refugee problems, account should be taken of the heavy burden on host countries. The inflow of refugees impeded the economic and social development of those countries, disrupted their fragile social order and profoundly affected their natural environment, so that they were often tempted to take extreme measures, including the forced repatriation of refugees, as had unfortunately been the case in a number of regions of the world in 1995. Refugees should be repatriated voluntarily and in dignity and safety, but the international community also had to ensure that host countries rapidly received the assistance they needed.

32. The problem obviously called for a comprehensive solution. In addition to the repatriation, resettlement and local reintegration of refugees, the economic and social infrastructure of the countries of origin had to be improved and the development of those countries had to be encouraged in order to prevent future outflows of refugees. The continuum between humanitarian assistance and medium-term and long-term development assistance therefore had to be guaranteed. The continuum was crucial so that the reintegration of refugees could be promoted after repatriation and so that future outflows could be prevented. In that connection, he endorsed the attitude of UNHCR, which was trying to prevent reconstruction and development assistance from assuming too much importance in its mandate. UNHCR should simply act as a catalyst, with emphasis on quick impact projects (QIPs). It should also strengthen its working relationship with international development organizations, such as UNDP and the World Bank, so that they would take over when hostilities had ended. The Government of Japan, for its part, intended to ensure a smooth continuum between assistance and development. In Mozambique and Guatemala, it had already begun providing bilateral economic assistance for returnees and it was taking the same approach to assistance to Angola.

33. The mass influx of Rwandan refugees in 1994 had made the international community realize that it was necessary to improve emergency response capacity. Assistance extended through a "service package", on UNHCR's initiative, had been very effective. It was to be hoped that the international community would further develop that type of emergency response. It was important to guarantee the safety of personnel who took part in

humanitarian activities. From that point of view, UNHCR should consider drafting a model agreement on the status of humanitarian assistance personnel based, for example, on the agreement on the status of personnel for peace-keeping operations.

34. His delegation drew attention to the importance of preventive measures. While recognizing the complexity of the problem, it invited the relevant international organizations and countries of origin, donor countries and all parties concerned to combine their efforts to deal with its root causes. It welcomed the initiative taken by UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (OIM) and OSCE for the holding of a regional conference on problems in the Community of Independent States and the neighbouring countries concerned. It had taken part in all the preparatory meetings for that conference, which should help greatly to prevent further problems. His Government, which had already pledged US$ 150,000 for the secretariat of the conference, intended to continue to support that process.

35. Close cooperation and coordination had to be established between the various international humanitarian organizations in order to meet complex humanitarian needs. The international community therefore had to establish a mechanism for that purpose. He commended UNHCR on its cooperation with various international organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and IOM, and on its collaboration with such United Nations bodies as WFP, but hoped that UNHCR would continue to take initiatives and play its lead agency role so that humanitarian assistance would be even more effective. The role of NGOs in the humanitarian assistance field was becoming increasingly important, as shown by UNHCR's Partnership in Action (PARinAC) programme, whose implementation should make the results of humanitarian assistance to refugees even more effective.

36. Japan fully endorsed UNHCR's policy of giving high priority to refugee women and children and to the impact of refugees on the environment. It placed particular emphasis on women and on the environment in its official development assistance programme and took a close interest in the environmental aspect of humanitarian assistance. It had been providing environmental specialists to UNHCR as coordinators of environmental activities. It intended to make an increased contribution to the UNHCR programme for refugee women and children and to its environmental protection programmes.

37. UNHCR's budget, which was estimated at $1.3 billion for 1995, was constantly increasing. Although he understood that that amount reflected the expansion of humanitarian assistance needs throughout the world, he pointed out that many donor countries, including Japan, faced budget constraints. He therefore appealed to UNHCR to intensify its efforts to make the management of its programmes more efficient and transparent. It was to be hoped that the suggestions made in the discussion on budget structure and working methods would be taken into account in UNHCR's activities so that the High Commissioner might continue to have the trust of all parties concerned. In that connection, his delegation hoped that the new inspection and evaluation service would help to increase the transparency and effectiveness of UNHCR's activities.

38. Now that the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees (CPA) was being completed, his Government appreciated everything it had accomplished. An international seminar on the Indo-Chinese exodus and the international response, in which the High Commissioner would personally take part, would be held in Tokyo on 27 and 28 October 1995 to summarize CPA activities.

39. His delegation regretted that Japan was underrepresented in UNHCR. Since that tendency had worsened in recent years, it requested the High Commissioner to recruit more qualified Japanese men and women. Despite a difficult budget situation, his Government had already pledged a contribution to UNHCR of about $70 million in 1995, including $25.7 million for the Great Lakes region and $15.5 million for the former Yugoslavia. On the occasion of the current session of the Executive Committee, he pledged a new contribution of $25 million, including $10 million for programmes in Asia, such as CPA, $7 million for activities in Africa and $2 million for the CIS countries.

40. Mr. BIDANDI SSALI (Uganda) said that population displacements and refugee outflows had become a major characteristic of the global political landscape, particularly in Africa. Events in the east and central African subregions since 1990 had been in the international headlines mainly because of the atrocities which had left millions of persons dead and driven millions of others to leave Rwanda and Burundi. However, as the events in the former Yugoslavia had shown, refugee movements on such a scale could take place anywhere in the world. The international community therefore had to try to continue to work for the achievement of the noble goals of peace and harmony among peoples. In that connection, his delegation paid tribute to the United Nations system for the untiring efforts it was making to find durable solutions to the refugee problem and to mobilize the necessary resources for humanitarian assistance.

41. The visit by the Deputy High Commissioner to Uganda in April, which had followed on that of the High Commissioner herself, had been extremely useful as it had offered an opportunity for a review of the refugee situation and an evaluation of needs. His delegation was encouraged by the steps taken by UNHCR to solve some of the problems that had been raised during the two visits. On 31 December 1994, there had been some 360,000 refugees in Uganda, one of the largest refugee populations in Africa. The new refugee registration operation now going on was aimed at determining the number of refugees and their characteristics so that action could be properly targeted.

42. The Government which had come to power in 1986 following a devastating civil war had made enormous efforts to reverse the trend and usher in an era of reconciliation, democratization and rehabilitation. The efforts have been rewarded by the return of over 500,000 Ugandans who had been forced into exile. Together with the flow of refugees from neighbouring countries, that massive return of Ugandan exiles had destroyed part of the results of the rehabilitation and democratization measures taken by the Government. The problem was being compounded by the fact that both the refugees and the returnees were in the same areas where civil war had been raging for so many years.

43. Despite that grim situation, his delegation reaffirmed that the Government of Uganda was firmly determined to continue to honour its obligations towards refugees. It nevertheless drew attention to certain issues. In the first place, Uganda was rated among the last on the list of least developed countries. Consequently, it relied heavily on the international community and other partners to help it save the lives of refugees. Uganda was one of the few countries to implement a generous and considerate policy of allocating land to refugees in order to promote self-sufficiency in terms of food production and income generation. Since food support was phased out as soon as refugees could produce their own food, the allocation of land enabled the international community to make large savings. So far, between 100,000 and 150,000 refugees had been allocated land and the number of beneficiaries should double by the end of 1996. In view of pressure on the land caused by the increase in the refugee population and the pace at which the local population was taking up commercial farming, it was becoming increasingly clear that the policy of allocating land would be in danger unless modern farming strategies targeting both refugees and nationals were designed and implemented.

44. Another area of concern was the damage to natural resources and the ecosystem caused by the large influx of refugees. At present, over 300,000 Sudanese refugees were crowded into one region of the country, with all the resulting consequences. In the circumstances, an environmental protection strategy had to be urgently designed and implemented. In that connection, the report by the environmental impact mission dispatched by UNHCR to Uganda in April was encouraging. The recommendations it contained should be translated into practical action as quickly as possible to beef up the efforts being made. He also drew attention to the project which had been proposed in 1994 by GTZ of Germany and was designed to strengthen the Refugee Directorate in the Ministry of Local Government to enable it to respond to environmental rehabilitation and development needs.

45. The volume of the humanitarian assistance provided by United Nations agencies had increased tenfold in recent years. However, when refugees received barely enough food to keep them alive, with the result that they easily succumbed to illnesses, it could be asked what had happened to international solidarity and obligations. In the first place, the food-supplying agencies had to recognize the seriousness of the situation and design quick impact strategies to deal with it. Secondly, the food basket for refugees, which now consisted of maize and beans, should include more nutritious food items that were locally available and cheap. It was worth noting as well that there had been a tendency by the parties concerned to overlook the serious situation in Uganda in favour of refugee situations elsewhere; that trend should be reversed.

46. Referring to the infrastructure of refugee settlements that had recently been established, he said that, unfortunately, owing to financial constraints, development activities were too slow and refugees had to stay in refugee transit camps for long periods. The resulting costs that had to be assumed by the international community were out of proportion with what it would have cost to develop camp infrastructure. Moreover, such delays dampened the enthusiasm of the authorities, who were less well disposed towards allocating land for infrastructural development. In many old camps, however, there had

been major achievements, such as schools, health units, access roads, boreholes, etc. Uganda took the opportunity to invite development agencies to form partnerships with the Government and UNHCR to promote the development of refugee-impacted areas.

47. In conclusion, he drew attention to the insecurity caused by the presence of refugees. On a number of occasions, his country had been bombed and occupied by Sudanese troops. Each time, the Government of Sudan had simply expressed its regret, without offering any compensation to the families whose members had died during the attack.

48. Another concern was that Uganda had been accused by some neighbouring States of supporting and harbouring dissident groups. The Ugandan authorities had always invited foreign diplomats accredited to Uganda to verify the authenticity of such claims, which had been proved to be baseless. Uganda believed in and practised the policy of good neighbourliness and had no wish to become entangled in the affairs of its neighbours, but, under the various international legal instruments which it had signed, it could not abdicate its responsibility to receive and host refugees.

49. Mr. LAFER (Brazil) said that the problem of refugees was global, not regional or national. It related to ways of ensuring all human beings their rightful place in a world which was the common heritage of all mankind. The fact that millions of persons continued to be displaced showed that there was a lingering risk of an antimony between the rights of individuals and the rights of peoples. It was difficult to change that situation and, in many parts of the world, repatriation encountered serious obstacles. First-asylum countries, which were often developing countries, had limited economic capability permanently to absorb mass influxes of refugees and it was difficult to find countries, even among those with considerable economic resources, capable of absorbing massive migratory movements. In that connection, he paid tribute to the High Commissioner and to the staff of UNHCR for the impressive and tireless efforts they were making to protect and provide relief for victims of war, violence and persecution.

50. Regrettably, the events of the past year, marked by genocide, ethnic conflict and resurgent violence, had once again confronted UNHCR with the challenge of refugee protection, particularly during mass influxes, situations that were outside the scope of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. As the Executive Committee had requested at its last session, UNHCR had called on States to propose ways of bridging gaps in the international protection regime and strengthening its legal and institutional basis. His delegation shared the views expressed in the Note on International Protection (A/AC.96/850) about the desirability of global efforts towards solution-oriented approaches to situations of mass influx, which should presuppose liberal asylum policies and international solidarity with the countries most affected by such influxes. Consideration might be given to the possibility of drafting a declaration of non-binding guiding principles based on solutions consistent with international humanitarian law and taking into account the limitations of countries hosting large refugee populations. Temporary protection was a pragmatic and flexible tool in situations of mass influx.

51. Brazil, which was deeply concerned about some troubling developments in the area of refugee protection around the world, as highlighted by UNHCR's Note, stressed the need for support at the international level of the institution of asylum and the principle of non-refoulement. It was regrettable that some States had adopted restrictive measures by setting up physical and legal barriers to prevent refugees from entering or obtaining asylum in their territory.

52. Brazil deplored and condemned xenophobic and racist acts of aggression and discrimination against refugees and welcomed the efforts UNHCR was making to protect women and children, the main victims in situations causing massive population displacements.

53. His delegation agreed with UNHCR's assessment that mere accession to basic instruments had been insufficient to guarantee a consistent response to refugee needs (A/AC.96/850, para. 13). The international community had to find appropriate structural solutions for the problems of underdevelopment and poverty. In that connection, Brazil joined UNHCR in calling for strong political action by the international community to tackle the root causes of the refugee problem. As indicated in the Note on International Protection, there was an urgent need to establish mechanisms to strengthen the national capacities of the most affected States to receive refugees (para. 15). In order to find sustainable solutions to refugee problems in countries of origin, the Executive Committee should remind Governments of the need for measures of international solidarity, including support for UNHCR's voluntary repatriation programmes and broader efforts to settle conflicts and bring about reconciliation of the parties.

54. Brazil was glad to note that UNHCR continued, particularly in Latin America, to disseminate the rules and principles of international protection implemented in the framework of the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA). In that connection, he drew attention to the adoption, as part of the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration, of the San José Declaration on Refugees and Displaced Persons, which dealt with the key issue of harmonizing legal criteria and procedures to consolidate the durable solutions of voluntary repatriation and local integration in central America, Mexico and Belize and to continue with the voluntary repatriation of Guatemalan refugees from Mexico.

55. Brazil had recently granted asylum to a large number of refugees, mostly from Angola and Liberia, and needed UNHCR's assistance to give them appropriate treatment. Financial assistance from UNHCR would also enable it to respond to the appeal for the resettlement and/or temporary protection of refugees from the former Yugoslavia. He paid tribute to the High Commissioner for her increasing interest in stateless persons and her willingness to assist them.

56. Mrs. HÄLL ERIKSSON (Sweden) said that the voluntary repatriation of some 4 million refugees and displaced persons from the former Yugoslavia would require formidable humanitarian and political coordination by all parties concerned. In that connection, she drew attention to the importance of guiding principles which must serve as the basis for the discussion on the role and responsibility of persons involved in the repatriation work. For

example, the primary responsibility for the rebuilding of their societies in peace and for respect for human rights lay with the countries of origin; as the coordinator and operator of humanitarian assistance in the former Yugoslavia, UNHCR had a major role in informing the countries of the region and all other parties of the safeguards and conditions for facilitating voluntary return. As a member of the European Union, Sweden had responded to UNHCR's appeals that the European countries should prepare to receive refugees and, to that end, had promoted burden-sharing and the sharing of responsibilities. To its regret, there had been no substantial progress towards the achievement of the sharing of responsibilities and efforts would now have to be coordinated and the costs of the future repatriation process shared.

57. With regard to international protection, Sweden was one of about 10 countries which had been cooperating in a planned way with UNHCR for years and with great success on resettlement as a durable solution. Of the very large number of asylum seekers who had arrived in Sweden in the past few years, only a minority qualified for refugee status under the Convention. Many asylum seekers had been found eligible to stay in Sweden, either for humanitarian reasons or because it had been impossible to return them to their countries of origin. The status determination and reception of those large numbers of persons were very costly and more economic means of meeting the needs of those who required protection had to be found. In that connection, UNHCR could help to identify the most efficient use of resources to achieve the maximum degree of protection and humanitarian assistance.

58. Sweden, like the other Nordic countries which had traditionally cooperated with UNHCR in the field of resettlement in those countries had been trying a long time to establish a dialogue with UNHCR without any preconditions and continued to hope that such a policy debate could be instituted. It was of the utmost importance that efforts and input from countries which cooperated with UNHCR should be used to provide the protection and assistance that the Executive Council was supposed to provide.

59. She stressed the need to promote accession to and the implementation of international legal instruments on statelessness, to educate personnel at the national level and within UNHCR and to supply expertise for work in areas where statelessness involved special problems. UNHCR must also collect and disseminate the relevant information, particularly in analysis form. As far as the future development of international protection was concerned, Sweden called for the establishment of an informal working group which would be set up to draft guidelines on behalf of persons fleeing from armed conflicts.

60. With regard to administrative and financial matters, Sweden attached particular importance to efficient governance and secure and predictable financing for UNHCR. In 1994, the Sub-Committee of the Whole on Administrative and Financial Matters had reached agreement on a number of important reforms of UNHCR's working methods and budget structure. In the year to come, those reforms would have to be built on and UNHCR would have to continue to be strengthened and streamlined. During the dialogue on the financing of the general programme, agreement had to be reached on policy and priorities, as well as on the appropriate level of resources for their implementation. It was the responsibility of all and in the interest of all

to enable UNHCR to carry out its main activities and efforts had to be made to find a mechanism within the Standing Committee that would work according to those principles.

61. Experience had taught the Nordic countries that efficient governance could be exercised only in a limited form. As the next step in the reform process, they would therefore encourage UNHCR to study the advantages and disadvantages of the present criteria for membership in the Executive Committee and to offer alternative solutions.

62. Mr. CONYBEARE (Australia), welcoming Russia, India and Bangladesh as members of the Executive Committee, said that the plight of the millions of persons displaced as a result of the Second World War and Australia's willingness to offer resettlement opportunities had marked the beginning of an exciting phase of Australia's migration experience. The millions of persons, including over half a million refugees, who had settled in Australia had created a much more tolerant and culturally diverse society in that country. Committed as it was to the concept and practice of tolerance, Australia was celebrating 1995, proclaimed by the United Nations as the International Year for Tolerance, with a range of activities building on its achievements as a just, democratic and tolerant society. Each year, as well, Australia designated one week during which Australians from all walks of life were encouraged to give some thought to the plight of refugees.

63. In the past 12 months, a global approach had been taken to the problem of refugee women. Referring to the status of women, he pointed out that the conclusions of the international conferences organized by the United Nations on population and development in 1994, social development in 1995 and women in 1995 were consistent with the approach Australia had taken in recent years towards the protection needs of women. In 1989, Australia had adopted the "Women at risk programme" in recognition of the priority given by UNHCR to the protection of refugee women in particularly vulnerable situations. The programme provided for the resettlement of and special settlement assistance to refugee women who were alone or the heads of families and identified as being in danger of victimization or serious abuse because of their gender. Some 500 settlement places had been allocated for women in that category. Australia was also working on guidelines for refugee decision makers that would take particular account of the specific problems of women.

64. Australia agreed with the High Commissioner's statement that the admission and protection of persons fleeing danger and persecution were still the essential responses to refugee flows and it welcomed UNHCR's initiative in bringing together resettlement countries for formal consultations. Resettlement was an appropriate solution for refugees in circumstances where their protection needs could not be met otherwise and it was regrettable that interest in it seemed to be decreasing. He encouraged UNHCR to stress the importance of that option as a durable solution.

65. Australia's humanitarian programme, which was separate from the general migration programme, was, on a per capita basis, the largest in the world and enjoyed wide community support. In each of the past three years, Australia had offered 13,000 resettlement places under that programme, which had three major components: the "refugee" component, which provided resettlement

opportunities for those who had been determined to be Convention refugees; the special "humanitarian" component for persons who were subject to gross discrimination amounting to a substantial violation of their human rights; and the "special assistance" component for categories of persons in particularly vulnerable situations who had close family in Australia. Unlike the other two categories, that component provided for the resettlement of persons who were still in their country of origin. All arrivals in Australia under the humanitarian programme were granted resettlement assistance.

66. UNHCR had been handed the enormous challenge of providing humanitarian relief to refugees in first-asylum countries and to those returning to their homes. In view of that situation, Australia had announced an increase of more than 18 per cent in emergency and refugee assistance, from A$ 71 million in 1994-1995 to A$ 84 million in 1995-1996. Moreover, the inclusion of the representative of an NGO, the Refugee Council of Australia, in the Australian delegation demonstrated that Australia recognized the important contribution made by NGOs to humanitarian action, on behalf of refugees in particular.

67. Australia, which was committed to the principle of a coordinated response, had established an emergency standby staffing scheme which could make a senior professional engineer available to join UNHCR's emergency relief operations within 72 hours. Australia had also played a significant role in the Working Group on Executive Committee Working Methods and supported the establishment of a standing committee of the whole responsible for policy and financial matters. The implementation of the proposed reforms to the Executive Committee's working methods would, however, have to be monitored to ensure that the Executive Committee continued to be an effective source of policy formulation and programme management.

68. With regard to refugee situations throughout the world, he noted that UNHCR's intervention had saved hundreds of thousands of lives in the former Yugoslavia. In addition to providing humanitarian relief funding, Australia had resettled some 14,000 persons from the former Yugoslavia since the outbreak of the conflict. In the Great Lakes region of Africa, Australia's assistance had consisted of sending an Australian defence force medical contingent, which had stayed in Rwanda until August 1995, and providing financial support for United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations working in the region. It had also made a large contribution to the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA). It had provided $9.7 million in funding, resettled over 18,500 Indo-Chinese refugees and, at UNHCR's request, sympathetically re-examined the residual caseload to determine who might qualify for resettlement in Australia.

69. In the Note on International Protection, the High Commissioner had suggested that a flexible and imaginative approach was required to deal with the humanitarian crises currently facing the international community. In Australia's view, mechanisms other than the 1951 Convention had to be used to find a solution to the massive numbers of persons displaced by civil strife. It supported the use of temporary protection in situations of mass influx, but considered that a clear distinction had to be made between Convention refugees status and temporary protection status.

70. Australia strongly supported UNHCR's efforts to solve the problem of statelessness as part of its prevention-related activities. As a party to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, it urged other countries to accede to those two instruments and to legislate to deal with the problem of statelessness.

71. Australia was a strong advocate of the international harmonization of approaches to asylum issues, provided that safeguards existed to ensure that refugees were given appropriate protection. In that framework, it had adopted safe third country legislation which could operate only when there was an agreement between Australia and the third country concerned. That legislation had been promoted by the arrival in Australia of persons who had been determined under CPA not to be refugees and whose integrity Australia had not wanted to compromise by granting them asylum and it had been used following the arrival of a number of Vietnamese refugees who had been resettled in China under UNHCR's auspices. Australia had also instituted other procedures to minimize the abuse of its asylum system, while making the health criteria for entry into its territory more flexible.

72. Australia was committed to alleviating the plight of refugees and displaced persons and willing to respond generously to humanitarian needs in the field, particularly as refugees had contributed in the past towards the shaping of Australia as an exciting and culturally diverse nation.

73. Mr. KAMANDA WA KAMANDA (Zaire) said that the refugee situation was still bad in the Great Lakes subregion in Central Africa. In the name of noble humanitarian principles, agreements had been signed by Zaire, Rwanda and UNHCR. Commitments had been entered into on all sides, but little progress had been made in the field for lack of assistance to countries of origin and host countries. Zaire was still sheltering refugees from Rwanda and Burundi. The environment and basic infrastructures continued to deteriorate and earlier damage had not yet been repaired. International opinion always seemed to forget that the refugee problem was basically the result of the situation in countries of origin. The lack of consistency between humanitarian statements and the practice of the international community and the United Nations system was increasingly frustrating for asylum countries. In Zaire, it was not clear whether it would be possible to carry out refugee identification and census operations in North and South Kivu. Zaire had the impression that the international community was of the opinion that, since Zaire had agreed to receive refugees, it had to continue to support them stoically regardless of the problems they caused.

74. Referring to international protection in mass influx in the light of Zaire's experience, he said that the main thing was to try to prevent situations giving rise to mass flows of refugees. When prevention had failed, solutions then had to be found to deal with the root causes of the exodus in order to guarantee the refugees' return to their countries in conditions of safety. Through concerted action, countries of origin had to be helped to eliminate those causes, contribute to the recovery of host countries and take the necessary measures to preserve the national security of the host countries and protect their population. The obvious inadequacies of the current system of international protection in mass influx explained the fact that States

traditionally regarded as pillars of refugee protection now felt incapable, for economic, social or political reasons, of continuing to honour their commitments.

75. The incomprehensible lack of concern on the part of the international community in general and the United Nations in particular about the causes of the tragedies taking place, for example, in the countries of the Great Lakes region and the dualist approach with which it tended to be combined bordered on complicity and might pave the way for a drift towards exclusion and ethnic purification. Some countries used the concept of voluntary repatriation to stand in the way, by means of intimidation, of the return of their nationals whom they had previously thrown out for ethnic or political reasons. The extended stay of refugees without any certainty of return in countries of asylum like Zaire, which were suffering from difficult economic and social conditions, could lead to clashes between the local population and the refugees, particularly when the latter had better living conditions than the former as a result of assistance from the international community. Assistance to refugees therefore had to go hand in hand with increased international support for host countries, as well as with more effective preventive action and stronger international support for rapid repatriation in safety and dignity.

76. Referring to the measures adopted in the framework of the Bujumbura Plan of Action adopted in February 1995 by the Regional Conference for Assistance to Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in the Great Lakes region, he said that the Plan could help guide the international community in situations of mass flows of refugees. It must be recognized that, in the Great Lakes region, few efforts had been made to settle conflicts and promote reconciliation in Rwanda and in Burundi. The international community had read reports of serious situations, but had not reacted as it should have done, and one tragedy had consequently followed another. If the international community continued to consider that there were good and bad dead people, it could be asked when and how the cycle of violence would end. Intensified efforts had to be made to resolve conflicts and ensure reconciliation in Rwanda and Burundi so that further abuses would not occur, particularly as United Nations peace-keeping and security staff in the region would be withdrawn by late 1995 for budgetary reasons, as though all the problems had been solved.

77. Zaire had been in favour of the proposal for a regional conference on peace, stability, security and development in the Great Lakes region made by the United Nations Secretary-General with the support of the Security Council. Such a conference had to be carefully prepared and based on prior bilateral agreements and operational repatriation agreements, as well as on a clearly stated joint definition of objectives and what was meant by a "comprehensive approach". Such an approach must not call into question the principle of the intangibility of borders and there should be no advocacy of the establishment of refugee settlements in neighbouring countries. At present, the real problems faced by Rwanda and Burundi - and, consequently, by Zaire, the United Republic of Tanzania and other countries in the region - had to be methodically identified and specific measure had to be taken to promote refugee repatriation, national reconciliation, power sharing, the establishment of the necessary balance within the armies, which had become the political mainstays of Governments, the establishment or revitalization of the

process of democratization, the creation of institutions, the strengthening of the rule of law, including an independent judiciary accessible to all and a responsible public administration, the reintegration of refugees, the reconstruction and development of countries of origin and host countries and border security. The proposed conference might also give the floor to those who were not often heard, the refugees themselves, especially those who were not guilty of any crime, but in whom fear had been instilled.

78. Zaire would continue to cooperate with UNHCR and to help find durable solutions to eliminate the root causes of conflicts in the Great Lakes region and to bring about the refugees' repatriation. Its generosity must, however, not be used as an alibi by other States, which also had to assume their international obligations, especially in order to lighten the burden of the countries of asylum.

79. Mrs. CARRIZOSA de LOPEZ (Colombia) expressed appreciation to UNHCR for its success in carrying out its functions and for the initiatives it was constantly proposing to the international community, particularly in order to bridge the gap in the law relating to international refugee protection. The objective was to supplement the rules on international protection without weakening the spirit of the Convention and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. It was obvious that the universalization of the legal regime of protection gave rise to problems because of the characteristics and particular needs of the different regions. That was, however, not the only problem and an interest must also be taken in other aspects of the refugee issue, such as burden sharing and preventive measures, and commitments had to be made in that regard. Measures had to be adopted immediately, but long-term strategies also had to be worked out on the basis of the humanitarian spirit of solidarity and pragmatic considerations relating to international stability and security. Everything necessary had to be done to help host countries in the event of crisis and make the necessary material and legal resources available to deal with a crisis when it continued for some time. Prevention, which was being referred to with ever greater insistence, was without any doubt part of the basic approach to the problem. There had to be a response in critical situations and an ambitious strategy to tackle the root causes of the refugee problem.

80. The humanitarian assistance that UNHCR could provide thanks to its own experience and with the support of the international community could obviously help to solve the problem of internally displaced persons. Although population displacements were less a matter of concern to the international community than applications for asylum, UNHCR's cooperation could be invaluable in dealing with the problem. In Colombia, an administrative unit for protection and disaster relief had also been asked to deal with forced displacements resulting from situations of violence. That unit was working to strengthen established technical and humanitarian assistance ties with the United Nations.

81. If account was to be taken of the long-term dimension of the question of prevention, an in-depth analysis of the causes of the problem had to be made without any preconceived ideas. Violations of human rights were obviously one of the causes of population displacements at the national and international levels. Political causes could not be separated from economic and social

causes, much less from cultural causes, as current events showed. Nationalism and xenophobia were as dangerous as poverty and, although it was the direct responsibility of Governments to combat those problems and eliminate them, action at the world level was essential to put an end to them once and for all.

82. The factors that destabilized national societies all affected the international community at one time or another. World development policies, whether based on altruistic sentiments or eminently pragmatic considerations, must also take account of world security. It was just as important to deal with poverty as with the arms race, environmental deterioration, racism and violations of civil and political rights. Those problems were all linked and national political strategies, as well as comprehensive international strategies, had to be adopted to solve them. Colombia was of the opinion that the latter were the most likely to have both negative and positive effects because of the time they lasted and the support they aroused. In conclusion, Colombia endorsed the priorities which UNHCR had set itself, especially with regard to refugee women.

83. Mr. MALIK (Bangladesh) said that Bangladesh was taking part in the session as a full member of the Executive Committee for the first time. The admission of three new members would undoubtedly add to the Executive Committee's effectiveness and make it more representative. Bangladesh had direct experience and firsthand knowledge of the refugee problem in all aspects. It had begun its existence as a sovereign State as the country of origin of over 10 million refugees and had thus had to contend on a priority basis with the formidable array of problems associated with their repatriation and rehabilitation. It recalled with gratitude the support it had received at that time from the international community in general and from UNHCR in particular.

84. Since then, it had twice been the country of asylum for a large refugee influx from Myanmar. The problem in the late 1970s had been satisfactorily resolved and Bangladesh was hopefully in the last phase of the repatriation of the over 250,000 refugees who had poured into Bangladesh in 1991 and 1992. Each time, its approach had been to seek an amicable solution, essentially through bilateral channels. UNHCR had, however, played a most positive and effective role as a facilitator. Bangladesh was thus in a good position to make a meaningful contribution to the work of the Executive Committee.

85. UNHCR was the lead United Nations agency responsible for assisting and protecting refugees. The nature and scope of the refugee problem had, however, changed greatly since UNHCR had been established against the backdrop of the cold war. There was thus an obvious need to look at the problems closely so that UNHCR could be equipped and attuned to the needs of the present time, which were the result not only of a different security environment and vastly increased numbers of refugees, but also of changing attitudes and perceptions of traditional States of asylum. The nature of UNHCR's intervention had also inevitably changed. Originally, it had assisted refugees in camps and had negotiated with host Governments and other concerned Governments regarding refugee protection and assistance and a durable solution to their problems. UNHCR was now concerned with the immediate needs of refugees and internally displaced persons under conditions of ongoing

conflict. In recent cases, armed humanitarian intervention had had to be mounted to supplement UNHCR's efforts in order to ensure the delivery of relief supplies. Today, there were 30 million internally displaced persons in the world as a result of savage, internecine conflicts. That number far exceeded the estimated 23 million refugees. Many traditional States of refuge or asylum, disconcerted or overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of refugees, were becoming increasingly restrictive in granting asylum.

86. The international community could naturally not use humanitarian assistance as a reason or pretext for not dealing with the root causes of conflict. Bangladesh therefore wholeheartedly endorsed the appeal made by the High Commissioner in 1994 for greater attention for the prevention and solution of refugee problems through a strengthened commitment to preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts and greater respect for human rights. Neglecting those aspects would mean addressing the symptoms and consequences of the problem and not its underlying causes and such an approach afforded no guarantee against a recurrence.

87. It was heartening that, in the 1990s, there had been such large-scale voluntary repatriations of refugees in a number of countries, including Cambodia, Mozambique, Afghanistan, El Salvador, Angola and South Africa. Prospects for additional mass repatriations were also favourable. Voluntary repatriation had obviously not been a preferred or even viable option during the cold war. Bangladesh agreed with the view that, where appropriate, problems in a country of origin should be dealt with urgently if they could reverse the trend of population displacement. It was clear, however, that the causes of forced migration could not properly fall within the mandate of an international humanitarian organization.

88. One of UNHCR's major constraints was funding. Except for administrative expenses, UNHCR depended on voluntary contributions and, during the present time of financial stringency, no other option was viable or attractive. There was, however, a clear need for greater operational flexibility and autonomy for UNHCR. It could not be emphasized too strongly that there was a need for the closest coordination possible between UNHCR, on the one hand, and selected NGOs and other United Nations agencies such as WFP, UNICEF, WHO, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and human rights bodies, on the other. In post-conflict situations, collaboration with UNDP became very important. His country would like to see a further strengthening of UNHCR's capacity to procure, store and transport substantial quantities of relief assistance within a short time. In the longer term, UNHCR's capability for long-range planning, policy analysis and multisector programming could be further developed.

89. The problems of refugees could not be solved by any one State or even a group of States. The international community as a whole had to tackle them through the different United Nations agencies working in concert. The solution did not lie in the tightening of borders and more restrictions on asylum-granting procedures. What was called for was a consensus on how best to coordinate efforts through the United Nations system. As recognized at the inter-sessional meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Whole on International

Protection held on 21 June, the emphasis should be on a pragmatic and flexible approach that would allow for important differences on the ground rather than on the expansion of standardized legal frameworks.

90. His delegation paid tribute to the High Commissioner for her untiring efforts to protect and promote the legitimate rights and interests of refugees worldwide. Bangladesh would cooperate closely with her to strengthen the international refugee protection regime to which the international community aspired.

91. Mr. ABDELMONEIM (Sudan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he deplored the false accusations made by the representative of Uganda against Sudan and regretted that he had to take up some of the Executive Committee's precious time refuting them. It was out of place for the representative of Uganda to raise controversial matters which were being discussed bilaterally under the good offices of the President of the Republic of Malawi.

92. Sudan had already communicated irrefutable information to the Ugandan authorities on the military assistance which Uganda was providing to the Sudanese rebels, whose leader spent most of his time in Kampala. The Ugandan denials in that regard were therefore outright lies. The Ugandan Government denied the existence of an active rebellion against it in the northern part of Uganda and accused Sudan of being responsible for the disturbances taking place there. He had also been given to understand that the representative of Uganda had stated that Ugandan citizens were being ill-treated in Sudan, especially by Sudanese security forces, and that was quite wrong. Sudan had over 1 million refugees, including Ugandans, who had always received effective protection and benefited from satisfactory living conditions in the country's main towns, in the south and in Khartoum. Moreover, Sudan had already had occasion to protest to UNHCR about the ill-treatment of Sudanese refugees by the Ugandan authorities. Without going into the details of Ugandan violations of international instruments, he stressed that that country was a source of tension in the region.

The meeting was called to order at 6.10 p.m.